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Manfred (which a generation later was to provoke Meredith's satire) a note says:

"Bad as is the age, we yet dare hope and believe no English audience would endure the daring impiety of many of the scenes. Even in the closet it shocks us to peruse dialogues between demons, spirits, a star, a witch, and *Manfred*."

Another note refers to the "Hymn of the Spirits" in the second act: "We forbear to quote the passage, which is dreadfully impious." All this calls to mind the wise disrespectful words:

"Considerably was the world
Of spinsterdom and clergy racked!"

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KING CNUT'S SONG AND BALLAD ORIGINS

King Cnut's song, according to Professor Gummere,¹ gives us our "first example of actual ballad structure and the ballad's metrical form, which is to be met in English records." He quotes the account from the *Historia Eliensis* of 1166. Cnut, with his queen Emma and divers of the great nobles, was coming by boat to Ely, and, as they neared land, the King stood up, and told his men to row slowly while he looked at the great church and listened to the song of the monks which came sweetly over the water. "Then he called all who were with him in the boats to make a circle about him, and in the gladness of his heart he bade them join him in song, and he composed in English a ballad [*cantilenam*] which began as follows:

Murie sungen the muneches binnen Ely,
Tha Cnut ching rew ther by.

Roweth, cnihtes, noer the land,
And here we thes muneches saeng!

The chronicler turns this into Latin, saying then, "and so the rest, as it is sung in these days by the people in their dances, and handed down as proverbial."

The Latin original reads: *quae usque hodie in choris publice*

¹ *The Popular Ballad*, pp. 58 ff., 249; also *Old English Ballads*, 254.

*cantantur; et in proverbii memorantur.*² Professor Gummere takes many chances when he translates, with the certainty implied by italics, *in choris publice* as "sung in their dances." The classical Latin *chorus* had three meanings—a choral dance, the persons singing and dancing, and a crowd or throng of any kind. For mediæval Latin *chorus*, the meaning choral dance fades. The citations given by Ducange³ refer to groups of singing people, often ecclesiastics, and they do not imply dancing by the participants in the singing. The presence of the dance element in the twelfth century singing of Cnut's song is anything but certain. But let that pass for the moment. The validity of the song as material for illustration of ballad history turns, it seems to me, upon whether the missing lines are epic or lyric, *i. e.*, whether the piece was a ballad or merely a song. If it was lyrical only, or the chronicler's story of its origin posthumous and spurious, the four lines are of doubtful value for affording us our first glimpse of actual ballad structure. But, granting that the chronicler's story is genuine, or fairly so, and that the missing verses were epic, these things may be noted:

1. The improvisation pictured is the King's, as he is surrounded by his nobles. It is aristocratic, not humble. If the ascription of the song to Cnut himself be denied, the authorship must go to his professional bards.

2. Cnut's song is not, in its origin, a dance song, whether or not it became one. The King's boat would be no appropriate place for a typical festal throng to dramatize a ballad—that species which, according to the current American view, is differentiated from other lyric verse chiefly by having had its origin in the dance. The testimony of the chronicler and of the song itself points to the inference that it started as a rowing song. Many Danish songs seem to have been rowing songs, judging from their refrains. Here are some illustrations:⁴

² Thomas Gale, *Historiæ Britannicæ, Saxonicae, Anglo-Danicae, Scriptores*, 2 vols. Oxford, 1691. Vol. I, p. 505. *Quo difficultate ad suam festivitatem Rex Canutus in Ely pervenit, et de longe audiens Monachos cantilenam composuit.*

³ *Glossarium Mediæ et Infimæ Latinitatis*. Equally venturesome is Professor Gummere's translation of *cantilena* as ballad rather than song.

⁴ From *The Mediæval Popular Ballad* of J. C. H. R. Steenstrup, translated by E. G. Cox. The numerical references are to Grundtvig's *Danmark's Gamle Folkeviser*.

All ye row off. No. 124.

Betake yourself to the oar. No. 140.

To the north-

And now lay all these oars beside the ship. No. 460.

Row off noble men!

To the maiden. No. 244 (Norwegian).

Row out from the shore, ye speak with so fair a one! No. 399.

Cnut's song ranges itself very well beside these—

Row, cnihtes, noer the land,

3. As to form, the song presents no very clear testimony. There is rhyme, possibly, though not certainly. The assumption of it necessitates giving the name *Ely* a final accent. The septenar rhythm is absent, as expected in a twelfth century lyric. There is some alliteration, "murie sungen the muneches," and "Cnut ching" and "cnihtes," but this, like the rhyme, may be accidental. The form is not that used by the Old English professional bards, but is more lyrical. Whether there was strophe structure, say two or four lines, rhymeless or rhymed, with refrain,⁵ is not clear from the lines that remain to us. Nor should it be forgotten that they do not come down to us in eleventh but in twelfth century form.

4. If the chronicler gives the history of the song accurately, and Professor Gummere interprets *choris publice* correctly, that history follows a usual process. There is origin among upper circles, descent among and preservation by the people, and utilization of the song by them as a dance song. Compare *The Hunt Is Up* of the reign of Henry VIII, used long after its upper circle origin widely and popularly as a dance song.

If Cnut's song is a ballad, or narrative song, it points to aristocratic emergence for this species, and away from its origin in the festal dances of villagers. I believe, however, that Professor Gummere's latest position⁶ is that, having originated as dance songs, ballads became real ballads, *i. e.*, narrative songs, only by "augmen-

⁵ *Deor's Complaint* from the Exeter Manuscript of Cnut's century, with its two to seven lines plus refrain, has similar structure, but is more literary—is less simple and oral.

⁶ *The Popular Ballad*, 1907, and his chapter in *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, 1908.

tations," by an "epic process" after they have become "divorced from the dance."

The conditions that produced the mediæval ballads are supposed by Professor Gummere to have prevailed till about the close of the fifteenth century,⁷ after which communal ballads can no more be made, because of changed social conditions; ballad-making becomes a "closed account." The eleventh century ought to be early enough, then, to be valid for illustration of ballad origins. How does Cnut's song help the theories of the communalists, in particular of the Harvard school of communalists? It did not originate in the dance, as it should have done to be an early ballad—indeed we do not know that it was ever a ballad at all, in theme or structure; and, if it was ever utilized as a dance song, it was at a time when it should have been divorcing itself from the dance and submitting to the "epic process."

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REVIEWS

English Pageantry, An Historical Outline. By ROBERT WITHINGTON. Harvard University Press, 1918. Vol. I.

The work presented in Dr. Withington's review of the English pageant will have a broad appeal, and indeed the scope of the first volume is unusually wide. Such material as the first chapter affords on the subjects of folk-mumming, processions, and minstrelsy, is even more comprehensive than that to be found in Brotanek's somewhat similar study of the Masque. If Dr. Withington's discussions seem at times disproportionate, it is often because he prefers to amplify rather than to quote all the known facts about various topics, and because some topics naturally call for more investigation than has been accorded to them hitherto. One may sometimes question the logic of the present arrangement of the substance, as for example when Folk-Mumming, Processions, Men in Armor,

⁷ "Conditions favorable to the making of such pieces ceased to be general after the fifteenth century." *Cambridge History of English Literature*, II, xvii, 448.